

# Bulletin of the Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc.

April 1996 Number 282.

The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club encourages the study of natural history and supports conservation. We issue our journal, the *Tasmanian Naturalist*, annually in October. People with a range of interests and knowledge are welcome as members.

Contact Don Hird (344 293) for more information, or write to GPO Box 68A Hobart, 7001.

## Program

General meetings start at 7.45pm on the first Thursday of the month in the Life Science Building at the University of Tasmania. Outings are usually held the following Saturday or Sunday, meeting at 10am outside the main entrance to the Museum in MacQuarie Street. If you don't attend the monthly meeting but wish to catch the excursion, it is advisable to check with a club contact as details are sometimes varied at the meeting.

- 2 May      **Macrofungi of Mount Wellington:** David and Ann Ratkowsky will give an overview, and present some of their recent findings among this poorly documented group
- 4 May      9 a.m.: Meet at the Museum or at Jackson's Bend, Ferntree at 9.15 (park at Chimney Pot Hill Road corner). Some walking is involved, bring mountain winter gear and lunch.
- 6 June      **Principles of Plant Taxonomy:** Alan Grey will give a general talk, with an emphasis on practical field application of identification techniques.
- 9 June      10 a.m.: Alan will lead an excursion to Snug Tiers.
- 4 July      **Antarctic Ice Cores and Drilling:** Sue Nor Woon will explain how bubbles trapped in ice can be used to reconstruct historical atmospheric conditions. This technique can be used with other evidence to explain some current distributions of habitats, particularly in higher latitude areas like Tasmania.
- 6 July      We will visit the Antarctic Division to be shown some practical aspects of ice core analysis. If time and conditions are suitable, a visit to the Coffee Creek Landcare Project (near Howden) may follow.
- 01 August   **Natural History of North America:** Bob Rose, a visiting zoologist, will give an overview of his home turf, including some comparisons with Tasmanian environments.

**New Members** A special welcome to Les Rubenach, Bob and Aileen Rose, and Tom Terry.

## !!! CLEARANCE SALE / GIVEAWAY !!!

Following recent rationalisation in our library, the following are available :

For Purchase	<i>Australian Wildlife</i> (long series)	\$50:
	<i>South Australian Ornithologist</i> (1924: 1933-57)	\$15;
	<i>Wildlife in Australia</i>	\$50,
	prices are initial suggestions, all offers considered.	

Giveaways	Various issues of <i>Langana</i> (Launceston Walking Club), <i>Ecos</i> , <i>Natural History</i> , <i>North-West Walker</i> , <i>Birds of South Africa</i> , <i>Birds</i> (RSPB) and <i>The Ring</i> .
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**Also Available** A book about **Swan Island** in Tasmania's northeast, and visited by club members two years ago, has recently been published. Check at a meeting, or contact Judy Sprent, for details.

## General News and Reports

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The 1996 Committee is unchanged from last year with the exception that John Reid is our new treasurer; the committee thanks Starola Jacka as outgoing treasurer.

Please remember that if you have any suggestions or requests (or offers) regarding club activities, please contact any member of the committee or drop us a note.

### February Excursion Notes : Hartz Mountains National Park.

On yet another bleak summer's day, only seven members arrived to venture to the Hartz plateau. Despite fierce, cold winds and regular sleet we undertook the short walk to Lake Osborne. The track has been upgraded and corduroyed, avoiding almost continuous boggy conditions otherwise. We observed occasional Bennett's wallaby and wombat droppings on the exposed plateau. For wombats finding burrow sites must be quite difficult, perhaps the old moraines offer some friable less-waterlogged soil conditions. At the lake we observed the small (3 mm diameter) freshwater cockle *Pisidium casternum* in the shallows. Another observation was an isopod crustacean about 10 mm long with jointed antennae and tail spines. We had hoped to see, or at least hear the recently described Tasmanian Moss Froglet on the plateau (it is recorded calling even at near-zero centigrade temperatures) but the chill factor must have subdued it on the day.

After lunch we retreated to the Arve valley where sheltered conditions prevailed. On the short walk from the picnic shelter the epiphytic fork-fern *Tmesipteris* sp. was observed on soft tree ferns. Beech orange (a fungal sporocarp) was also observed on along the track. Closer to Geeveston, we were bemused by the "balanced account of the Tasmanian forestry debate" presented near the roadside. Also here, Macleay's swallowtail butterfly was evident, with the large deep-green males patrolling territories along the road edge. The larvae of this species feed on sassafrass which was much in evidence locally. Brown Froglets were heard calling. A significant landsnail find was an undescribed *Stenacarpa* sp., having no umbilicus.

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### Conservation Progress

Two issues have been prominent.

The Wellington Park Trust released its latest recommendations early this year. Submissions from the public are available for viewing at the Trust. Remarkably few were received, including none from the most prominent conservation groups, despite their earlier headline-seeking on the issue. The Trust seems intent on separate management, our view was that National Park status and management should be considered in view of the natural values present and the proximity to (and susceptibility to impact from) Hobart. A disturbing element was the invitation by the Trust to "recreational vehicle" (i.e. 4wds) to endorse suggested access to some fragile fire trails in areas of conservation significance. This populist approach is risky; one only needs to view the damage at Cloudy Head or Southport Lagoon to see that "mud-bashing" is hardly a legitimate or responsible recreation. Most of the recorded biodiversity values of the Wellington Range are from the Hobart end (Mountain Park); the considerable expense of the Trust thus far hasn't extended to exploring these values further, even though recent finds of club members indicate values under-represented elsewhere.

Late in 1995, the Public Land Use Commission made significant recommendations including six new National Parks for Tasmania. In January State government agreed to two of these (largely as consolidations of existing coastal reserves), but made no public comment on the others. Several months later there has been no explanation of or reasons for these decisions, despite further submissions been solicited for the next topic of enquiry. Some of the impetus for the latter was from the former federal government's *Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative* (CAR) Reserve program, which already seems subject to dilution with a new government in place. A problem with these processes is that despite considerable habitat change continuing, we don't know our biotas well enough (recall the talk last year on earthworms where many new species have been discovered recently). We are nonetheless bombarded by hype suggesting that because we have magnificent wilderness we need do no more. The resolution of the CAR process (including its genuine public consultation) may well become a benchmark in sustainable conservation, even though it is not in itself a new concept.

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## MARIA ISLAND FEDERATION OF FIELD NATURALISTS

### MEETING, FRIDAY 22ND MARCH, 1996.

by  
Sue & Melanie Lovell

We arrived at Louisville Point to catch the 6pm ferry to Maria Island. All boarded the ferry and were seated comfortably in time to watch Don and family hurdle their luggage onto the jerry, park the car and sprint along to the ferry with seconds to spare. The ferry was escorted to Maria Island by a few curious gannets.

On arrival we set up our tent alongside Bernacchi's Creek amidst Cape Barren Geese, Native Hens rattling their bracelets and a few Forester Kangaroos out for their evening graze. After tea a large group gathered to go spotlighting and saw many Bennetts wallabies, brushtail possums, Forester Kangaroos, a large wolf spider on the road and the glow of Dons bicycle reflector lights, mimicking red eyes in the distance. During the night the wildlife came to us, we had possums mangling our bananas trying to extract them through the side of the tent wall and our alarm call was the raucous cries of foraging Native Hens.

*Saturday* - The choice of activities was a day walk to Bishop and Clerk Mountain with Phil Collier, geology walk to Fossil Cliffs and quarry with geologist, Bert Moore, or a seashore walk to Painted Cliffs. We took the latter and received a very informative talk on seaweed decomposition and its effect on the atmosphere given by Harry Burton. Some unusual pieces of seaweed, which had grown in a zig-zag formation were found on the shore, swimming crabs, egg sacs of the sea snail *Polynices sordida* and a New Holland Spindle shell were also found washed upon the beach. We had lunch at the Painted Cliffs where Harry talked to us on various seals and tracking devices used to trace their habits. A swim finished the afternoon for Melanie. We then attended a well presented evening talk on Maria Island geology given by Bert Moore.

*Sunday* - A great morning for the bird walk to Bernacchi's Creek, Priscilla Park took half of the group, while we went with Sue & Phil Collier. Assorted fungi were found, also an Emperor Gum moth caterpillar that appeared to have been parasitised, the native currant bushes were heavy with fruit. Among the various birds we heard, Kookaburras, Golden whistlers, Yellow wattle birds, black faced cuckoo shrikes, silver eyes and a good sighting of a Sooty fly catcher, male & two females. Around the reservoir we saw & heard Tasmanian morn bills, a black duck was seen among reeds on the dam. We hurried back so members could attend the federation meeting.

While the meeting was in progress, Melanie & I walked to Fossil Cliffs inspired by Berts talk. Great views out to Schouten Island & Freycinet Peninsular, we saw some unusual skinks on the rocks. The amount of fossilized shells in the cliffs was amazing. We came back via the airstrip occupied by many pairs of Cape Barren Geese, past the cemetery where a maori chief is buried among the early settlers and back through Darlington. Most people had already left to go home.

While waiting for the ferry it was remarked, how kind the weather had been to us, and how all had enjoyed their stay on Maria.

## My trip to Maria Island

by

Alex Frusher

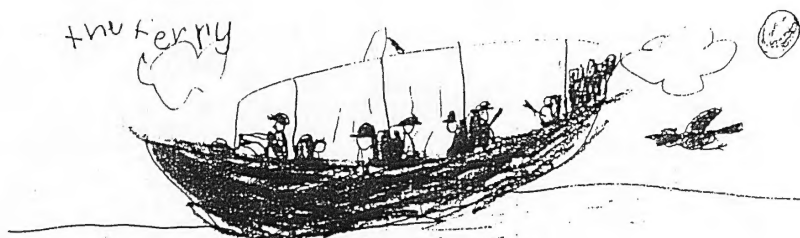
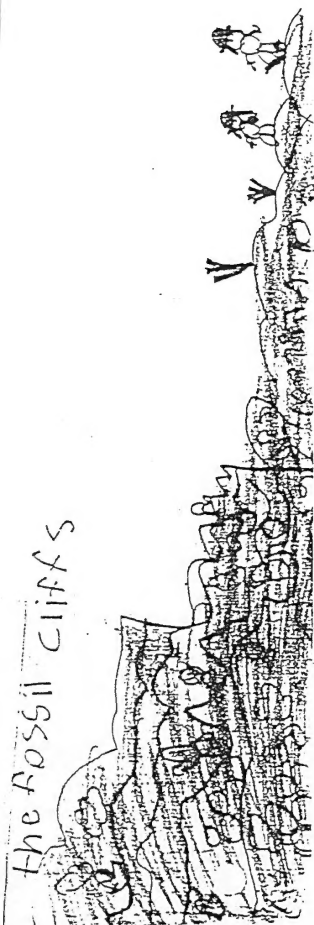
We had to drive for 1 hour to get to the ferry. At the ferry we loaded our luggage onto the ferry. The man wanted to put my toy leopard Pipa on, but I said no. When we got to the island we put our luggage into big trolleys - some of the adults felt like convicts. The Cabins were very dusty and a rat was in the cabin and possums were everywhere. A poor little pademelon came into the place where the parents were talking. It came right in and did a couple of circles and went out. Later that night we went on a spotlighting walk. We went to look for possums and wallabies and kangaroos. We saw some Brushtails with babies on their backs and one of them was near the toilets.

When we went to sleep we shut the door to the cabin because the possums would get in. We slept in queen bunks. Kim and I slept in the middle. It was fun. On Saturday we went to the convict buildings. One of the buildings used to be a hotel. I cut my finger on cutting grass. We saw geese with green beaks and wild hens and a poor little paddy that had got stuck in the creek.

Then we went on a fossil walk but we didn't go on the beach walk or the mountain walk. The fossil walk was EXHAUSTING !!

Next morning we went on a bird walk and then went back to have pancakes for breakfast. Then we went on a history walk and after lunch we went home on the ferry. On the way back we saw a little wombat sleeping on a person's lap.

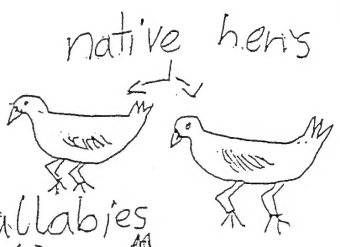
THE END



## Fieldtrip to Maria Island

by Kimberley Frusher

When we got to the ferry we put our luggage on the ferry. While we were waiting to get on, daddy helped a girl get a hook out of a fish's mouth. Mummy and daddy were a bit embarrassed because we had so much luggage but when the last family came on they felt a little better because they had a lot of luggage too. On the ferry I saw a cormorant on a little jetty and a yellow headed gannet following the ferry. Because it was a clear day we could see some of the buildings from the ferry. I saw a white square and mummy thought it was a grave yard and she was right because the next



Something  
on Maria  
Island\*

